

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 PM-07 NSC-10 SS-15 RSC-01 CIAE-00

DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-03 USIA-15 PRS-01 OMB-01

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R 311130Z AUG 73

FM AMCONSUL BELFAST

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 556

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UNCLAS BELFAST 134

AUGUST 30, 1973

E.O. 11652: N/A

SUBJECT: LOCAL PRESS ON HEATH VISIT

REF: BELFAST 133.

1. PRESS REACTION HERE TO HEATH VISIT FOLLOWED PREDICTABLE LINES.

2. NEWS LETTER (OFFICIAL UNIONIST) CARRIED CLEVERLY ARRANGED TWO LINE HEADLINE. TOP LINE: "MISSION A FAILURE" : SECOND LINE: "HEATH IS TOLD." EXCERPTS FROM LEAD EDITORIAL TITLED "STRETCHING ULSTER PATIENCE" FOLLOWS:

QTE FOR THE AVERAGE DECENT MAN IN THE STREET, BE HE PROTESTANT OR ROMAN CATHOLIC, THERE CAN BE LITTLE SATISFACTION IN ANYTHING THAT HAS TRANSPIRED, SO FAR, FROM THE VISIT OF THE PRIME MINISTER

THE PEOPLE COULD HAVE BEEN SPARED THE STIRRING UP OF ANOTHER OUTBREAK OF POLITICAL WRANGLING.

IT WAS NOT TO BE. WRANGLING SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN THE CUMULATIVE UNCLASSIFIED

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RESULT OF THE THREE WAY TALKS THAT TOOK PLACE AS BETWEEN MR HEATH

AND UNIONIST AND REPUBLICAN LEADERS.

ONE OF THE MAIN QUESTIONS OF CONTROVERSY AND DISSENSION IS THAT SURROUNDING THE FUTURE OF THE ROYAL ULSTER CONSTABULARY

AND THIS AT A TIME WHEN THE MORALE OF THE FORCE WAS NEVER OF GREATER IMPORTANCE

FOR THE MAJORITY OF THE PUBLIC THE HEATH VISIT IS ALREADY BEING REMEMBERED FOR TWO DISCORDANT NOTES - THE SUGGESTION THAT THERE IS IMPATIENCE IN BRITAIN OVER SLOWNESS IN SETTLING DIFFERENCES ON THE WORKING OF THE NEW ASSEMBLY AND THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE THEORY THAT THIS HAS CREATED A VACUUM IN ULSTER WHICH IS BEING FILLED BY IRA TERRORISM.

WE ARE LEFT ONCE MORE WITH THE BLANK WALL OF GOVERNMENT DETERMINATION TO TAKE NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR GOVERNMENT FAILURE.

THE REFERENCE TO THE "VACUUM" AT STORMONT IS PARTICULARLY GALLING COMING, AS IT DOES, FROM THE VERY SOURCE THAT CREATED IT.

AS FOR THE SUGGESTION THAT THE "VACUUM" IS TODAY THE CAUSE OF IRA VIOLENCE, ONLY PEOPLE WHO DO NOT LIVE IN ULSTER COULD CONCEIVABLY FORGET THAT THE PRESENT CAMPAIGN OF TERRORISM STARTED MORE THAN FIVE YEARS AGO.

MR HEATH AND HIS GOVERNMENT CONTINUE TO MISREAD THE SITUATION HERE

PROGRESS THERE MUST BE IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN EXECUTIVE, BUT THE FOUNDING OF THE ASSEMBLY IS NOT THE ANSWER TO THE MAIN NORTHERN IRELAND PROBLEM - VIOLENCE

HOW IT CAN BE REASONED THAT VIOLENCE - WHICH COULD YET BRING DOWN THE HEATH GOVERNMENT IN LONDON - SHOULD BE SEEN AS SOMETHING OF A STIMULANT FOR THE FORMATION OF A NEW ADMINISTRATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND, AN ADMINISTRATION THAT HAS POINTEDLY BEEN GIVEN NO POWERS TO DEAL WITH VIOLENCE, IS BEYOND COMPREHENSION. UNQTE

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3. IRISH NEWS ACCEPTED PM'S THESIS OF NEED FOR ASSEMBLY ACTION TO LAUNCH ARGUMENT FOR COUNCIL OF IRELAND. PAPERS ANALYSIS COULD HARDLY HAVE BEEN DRAFTED IN A WAY MORE TO ANTAGONIZE PROTESTANTS (BUT OF COURSE THEY DON'T READ IRISH NEWS, ANYWAY). PENULTIMATE PARAGRAPH OF BELOW QUOTED EXCERPTS, IN DAYS OF TERRORISM COMING FROM BOTH SIDES, SEEMS AND EXTRAORDINARILY INEPT, IF NOT DANGEROUS, STATEMENT. EXCERPTS:

QTE THERE IS NO LONGER ANY ROOM FOR EMOTIONAL POLITICS. SPEED IS NOW NEEDED IF WE ARE EVER TO MOVE AWAY FROM THE PERILS OF THE TIMES.

THE BELIEF GROWS THAT THE ASSEMBLY STILL OFFERS A CHANCE TO KEEP DESPAIR, TO LOOK AHEAD AND TAKE POSITIVE MEASURES BY WHICH PEACE CAN BE ESTABLISHED. THE ASSEMBLY MAY APPEAR TO BE A SMALL GAIN : IT IS NONETHELESS WORTH A TRIAL

THE ASSEMBLY IS A POLITICAL INITIATIVE WHICH THE VARIOUS PARTIES HAVE ACCEPTED BY CONTESTING SEATS IN IT. PUBLIC OPINION IS BEHIND IT BECAUSE IT IS SEEN AS A WAY OF GETTING AWAY FROM THE STERILE POLITICS OF THE OLD STORMONT.

THE CORE OF THE ASSEMBLYS EFFECTIVENESS IS THE SECURING OF AGREEMENT BY THE POLITICAL PARTIES FORMING IT, THAT THEY CAN SHARE POWER.

MR HEATH MADE IT CLEAR YESTERDAY THAT ANY CONFERENCE ON A COUNCIL OF IRELAND WAS CONTINGENT ON THE SPEEDY FORMATION OF AN ASSEMBLY EXECUTIVE. THIS IS GROUND CLEARLY GAINED, AN OCTOBER SUMMIT MEETING IS NOT, THEREFORE, OUT OF THE QUESTION.

THERE IS A GROWING CONVICTION AT WESTMINSTER THAT THE NORTHERN IRELAND PROBLEM MUST BE SEEN IN THE CONTEXT OF EVENUTLA REUNION AND THAT ONLY THERE WILL BE FOUND THE LASTING SOLUTION OF A PROBLEM WHICH BRITAIN IN HER BLINDNESS CREATED WHEN SHE IMPOSED PARTITION AGAINST THE PASSIONATE PROTESTS OF THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF THE IRISH PEOPLE.

IF THERE IS A BORDER IN IRELAND TODAY, IT IS THE CREATION OF NORTHERN UNIONISTS WHO, DURING THE YEARS 1912-14, OPENLY ESPOUSED REBELLION, LANDED ARMS, INVOKED THE AID OF THE GERMAN UNCLASSIFIED

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KAISER AND SAW THEIR LEADERS SHAMELESSLY SEDUCE BRITISH ARMY COMMANDERS FROM THEIR ALLEGIANCE. ALL IN OPPOSITON TO A HOME RULE BILL WHICH GAVE THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND ONLY LIMITED POWER OVER THEIR DOMESTIC AFFAIRS.

IT WAS THEN THAT THE NATIONALLY MINDED PEOPLE RELEARNT THE LESSON THAT ENGLISH POLITICIANS WILL YIELD TO VIOLENCE AND THREATS WHEN THEY WILL NOT LISTEN TO THE VOICE OF JUSTICE AND RIGHT.

MR HEATH IS SEEING THAT IT IS IN BRITAIN'S OWN INTEREST THAT HIS INITIATIVES ARE JUST AND PEACEMAKING; AND THAT THROUGH A COUNCIL OF IRELAND HE COULD BEGIN A NEW CHAPTER IN ANGLO-IRISH RELATIONS UNQUOTE
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